(c) the requirement of skilled engine drivers for the Indian Railways in the next five years how will it met by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, re-engagement (and not extension) of retired hands subject to prescribed conditions has been allowed on daily remuneration basis to tide over any exigency that may arise due to day to day shortage.

(c) Requirement of Drivers is worked out in six monthly reviews and met by normal procedure for recruitment from open market and promotion of staff from the feeder grades.

Gauge conversion between Rangia to Murkhoselek

1402. SHRI URKHAO GWRA BRAHMA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons why the gauge conversion work between Rangia to Murkhoselek is not taking place; and

(b) by when the work is going to be taken up by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) The gauge conversion of Rangia-Murkongselek including linked fingers has been taken up. The detailed estimate for Rangia-Rangapara North has been prepared. Hydrological study of the area undergo regular washways/subsidences/slips etc. have been taken up by Indian Institute of Technology/Roorkee.

Sub-standard foodstuff in Shatabdi trains

†1403. DR. CHHATTRAPAL SINGH LODHA:
PROF. R.B.S. VARMA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of complaints received by Government regarding sub-standard quality of food-stuffs being served in Shatabdi trains and the action taken by Government threon;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) the action being taken by Government to improve the food quality alongwith the action being taken against sub-standard food material suppliers; and

(c) the reasons for providing mineral water of private companies in Shatabdi trains despite the availability of 'Rail Neer'?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Data in regard to complaints is not maintained train-wise for All Indian Railways.

(b) Improvement in catering services is an ongoing process. This includes maintenance of hygiene, standard and quality of food services, introduction of good quality packaging/use of biodegradable material, revision of menus, procurement of raw material from approved sources etc. Regular/surprise checks are conducted by the railway administration to monitor the catering services and remedial action is taken.

(c) There are only two Railneer Plants operational at present from which packaged drinking water is supplied to Pantry Cars and other static units as far as practicable as total requirements of Indian Railways cannot be met by these two plants alone.

Tenders of work of Silchar-Lumding track conversion

1404. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that tenders have been invited for work of Silchar-Lumding track conversion;

(b) whether the work order has been given to the lowest bidder and

(c) the details as to how many local and small contractors were awarded work order to carry out the work?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Tenders have been invited for Lumding-Silchar gauge conversion project and have been finalized as per railway's extant procedure and guidlines. Most of the tenders are awarded to the contractors settled in Assam.